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SERIAL RECORDS

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ELECTRONIC NEWS DISSEMINATION WORKING

Electronic news dissemination, inaugurated at the beginning of the year by USDA's News Center, appears to be off and running.

Several different selections are now offered to users on the Dialcom system, the network used primarily for electronic mail by USDA, land grant university and state department of agriculture communicators.

"NEWS" selection includes USDA and agency national news releases, notes to correspondents and announcements of top level speeches. Most releases do not exceed two pages of double-spaced copy, and are available for one week.

"CRB" selection gives the user the latest USDA crop and livestock report summaries--usually no longer than two pages, including a significant table or two. These are reports from USDA's Statistical Reporting Service, with the help of that agency's Crop Reporting Board.

"OAS" selection allows the user to read summaries of the latest USDA outlook and situation reports, prepared by the Economic Research Service. Again the summaries are reasonably short.

"FAS" selection includes reports and announcements from USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. These reports vary in length.

"ERA" selection stands for economic research report abstracts--the latest addition to the USDA electronic news service.

"FPL" selection allows the user to access the weekly "Farm Paper Letter" prepared by Ed Curran, in the news operations of USDA's Office of Governmental & Public Affairs.

Users can also move directly from the "USDA" service to either the "UPI" or the "MAIL" services of the Dialcom system.

To reach the USDA services, user simply types "USDA" at the system prompt.

Then the computer will instruct the user how to check each of the various selections. A scan and search feature is included in the service to speed up the time of use by the user.

USDA's success with the electronic news service is being copied by the Food & Drug Administration in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics in the U.S. Department of Labor also has been reviewing the USDA system with hopes of implementing something similar.

REGIONAL INFO OFFICES NOW SERVE ONLY AMS

After many years of serving two or more USDA agencies, the regional information offices administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service now serve only their parent marketing agency.

In fiscal year 1981, then five AMS regional information offices (Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, New York and San Francisco) were providing field information and public participation services for six USDA marketing and inspection agencies.

Due to budget and personnel ceiling restrictions and other reasons, the Federal Grain Inspection Service, Office of Transportation and Packers & Stockyards Administration discontinued agreements for services early this fiscal year, and the Food Safety & Inspection Service followed a few months later.

When the Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service pulled out of the agreement June 30, it left the offices providing information services only for AMS.

As a result of the changes, the five offices--in existence since the War Food Administration was established during World War II and during succeeding USDA agencies--were reduced to three offices, in Atlanta, Chicago and San Francisco.

From more than 35 public information officers, specialists and support staff in the five offices in the late 1960s, the three offices have been reduced to a total of 9, or 3 personnel each--an information officer, an information specialist and a secretary.

"AG IN THE CLASSROOM" GETTING ATTENTION

Education and farm leaders from 11 midwestern states will gather in Lincoln, Nebraska, August 3 to discuss and review the "Agriculture in the Classroom" program.

The program is a cooperative effort by USDA, state departments of agriculture, land grant universities, farm organizations and educators throughout the country to help children understand where their food and fiber come from and the role of agriculture in the economy and society.

At the Lincoln meeting--the first in a series of regional meetings about the program--participants will share ideas and projects that have proven successful in bringing the story of agriculture to the nation's children.

One such project in North Dakota is an introductory "short course" on the economics of agriculture for elementary and secondary school teachers.

In another project, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture has developed a guide to materials about agriculture that teachers can use when planning

lessons. And in Iowa, commodity groups working with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Iowa State University are developing a curriculum on that state's agriculture for use in elementary schools.

The Lincoln meeting, which is open to the public, will be from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Lincoln Hilton Hotel.

Anyone interested in attending the meeting may contact Cathy Koubek, public information officer, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 94947, Lincoln, NB 68059, or call (402) 471-2341.

Those interested in more information about the "Agriculture in the Classroom" program should contact Sally Katt, coordinator of the program in USDA's Office of Governmental & Public Affairs, Special Programs Center, Room 510-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, telephone (202) 382-9435.

NEW USDA ASSISTANT SECRETARY NOMINATED

President Reagan has nominated Wilmer "Vinegar Bend" Mizell to be USDA assistant secretary for governmental and public affairs.

Mizell, former U.S. representative from North Carolina and assistant secretary of commerce, is a sales representative for Southern Tool Manufacturing Company in Winston-Salem, N.C.

He succeeds James C. Webster, appointed as USDA's first assistant secretary for governmental and public affairs during the Carter administration.

Claude W. Gifford has been acting assistant secretary since January 1981.

Mizell, who hails from Vinegar Bend, Ala. (hence his nickname "Vinegar Bend"), also is a former major league baseball pitcher. He ended his baseball career in 1962.

He must be confirmed by the Senate Agriculture Committee, chaired by Sen. Jesse Helms, and the full Senate before he can be appointed.

CHANGE AT K-STATE, LA-STATE AND RUTGERS

Some agricultural communicator changes have been reported from Kansas State University, Louisiana State University and Rutgers University.

Roger Medlin, formerly assistant publications editor for the Kansas Extension information staff, has been named head of the publications section. He succeeds Chet Unruh who retired after 20 years of Extension information work.

Christine Buchanan has joined the Kansas Extension information staff as assistant publications editor, and will handle 4-H and community publications formerly handled by Unruh.

Jane Honeycutt, formerly with the Mississippi State University extension information staff, recently joined the Louisiana State University information staff as a publications editor.

Mary Jane Christofferson has moved from production editor of regional materials at Rutgers University to coordinator for university publications in Rutgers's University publication office.

NOW, BOOK ON WORD PROCESSING FOR WRITERS

The August issue of WRITER'S DIGEST magazine carries an advertisement for "the first book on word processing written especially for writers."

The book, appropriately called "The Word Processing Book -- A Short Course in Computer Literacy," is written by Peter A. McWilliams, a writer and author of books, including "The TM BOOK" which was a No. 1 New York TIMES bestseller.

According to the ad, the book will tell you...

- What word processing computers are, what they do and how to buy one.
- How to save \$5,000 to \$15,000 by purchasing a personal computer with word processing capabilities rather than a "stand alone" word processor.
- Why the three best-selling personal computers (Apple, Atari and Radio Shack) make the worst word processors.

The book is available at most bookstores, or by mail. Either call toll-free 800-421-1809 (in California call 213/657-7710) and charge to Visa or MasterCard, or send \$10 to Prelude Press, P.O. Box 69773, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

The ad says money back, including postage both ways, if you're not delighted.

ELECTRONIC "CLIPPING SERVICE" AVAILABLE

An electronic news "clipping service" is now available to those using the USDA electronic mail system provided by Dialcom.

The service, called "Newstrack" by Dialcom and United Press International who developed the automatic news retrieval system, is very easy to use and very fast on delivery.

"Newstrack" delivers UPI stories originating anywhere in the country, by national, regional and state bureaus, into electronic mail user's mailbox as the stories are released on the wire.

Anytime the user checks his EM mailbox, all of the stories released by UPI since the last time the user checked will be placed first, via "express mail", in the mailbox.

By developing a "Newstrack" profile of select words, the user will only receive those UPI stories which the user wants to read.

For example, USDA's News Center most likely is searching for a variety of news stories related to agriculture, food, fiber and forestry, national or regional.

On the other hand, a state department of agriculture information office or a land grant university agricultural information office may only want news stories from that particular state.

The "Newstrack" profile allows the user to be that selective.

To set up a profile, simply type the words "PROFILE NEWSTRACK" at the system prompt. Then wait a few seconds, sometimes minutes if the system is very busy, and then computer will provide instructions on setting up the profile of words.

A word of warning! Refrain from using single words such as "farm" or "food", "director" or "commissioner", etc.

Single words such as that will give the user every story around the nation containing those words in a singular fashion.

Combine words, such as "Florida commissioner of Agriculture" or "Florida agricultural commissioner", or "Nebraska farmers" or "Illinois pork producers".

In addition to UPI stories, "Newstrack" also picks up stories released by the Gannett News Service, Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service, United Press Canada, Universal Press Syndicate, Independent News Alliance and probably others which have not been discovered yet.

Anyone needing help in setting up their "Newstrack" profiles on their Dialcom electronic mail system may contact AGRO01, AGRO02 or AGRO03.

In addition to USDA's Public Affairs Office and News Center, others using "Newstrack" are USDA Secretary's Press Officer and Forest Service Information Office. All have high regard for the new electronic clipping service.

It may be advisable for those using the service to share ideas on how this has helped in information retrieval, by letting the "Inside Information" editor know (AGRO02).

NOTE TO "INSIDE INFORMATION" READERS: Those receiving "Inside Information" via electronic mail, and who no longer want to receive duplicate copies via regular mail service, let Nancy Bevis, AGRO01 (202) 447-7454 know. Maybe we can save on our postage and the "extra" postal mail coming to your office.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, State Departments of Agriculture and Land Grant Universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to Stan W. Prochaska, Assistant Public Affairs Director, Room 402-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, to AGRO02 on the Dialcom electronic mail system, or call (202) 447-7454.